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SUBJECT: KARBALA: SERMON FOCUSES ON THE CONSTITUTION AND SECURITY

11. (U) This is a PRT Karbala cable.

12. (U) Again this week Sayed Ahmed al-Safi, Head of the Al Abbas shrine office, conducted the Friday sermon at Karbala's al-Husain shrine. Sheikh Abdul Mehdi al-Karbalaee reportedly headed the recent meeting of the Karbala Provincial security body, but he was not at the Friday sermon. The message of this sermon was directed both to citizens and to government officials. To the former, al-Safi encouraged respect for the constitution and to the later, a more proactive parliament and security effort. Local media coverage included Karbala Radio, and the following television channels; Karbala, Al-Iraqya, Al-Furat, and Al-Salam.

13. (U) The sermon highlighted three points; respect for the constitution, outdated Iraqi laws that are inconsistent with the new government, and security. Al-Safi first asked the people to honor the constitution explaining that if applied it would benefit the whole of Iraq. He then directed the remainder of his sermon towards the government. Calling on them to be empathetic, al-Safi encouraged the central and provincial governments to compete with one another to provide the public with the best possible services. He also highlighted that the legal code of Iraq has not consistently been updated to reflect the change in government since the fall of the regime. Al-Safi chastised the parliament for this, accusing them of being slow to enact new legislation. The final topic began with al-Safi praising a recent raid by Iraqi police near the Syrian border that resulted in the capture of 200 suicide-bomber belts. He speculated that the target of those suicide belts were the holy places in Iraq including the shrines in Karbala. He called on the government to take a serious stand regarding security.

15. (SBU) Comment: Al-Safi tirelessly reminds the government of their responsibility. Otherwise, the sermon was relatively calm. PRT Karbala does not have a more expeditious mechanism of transmitting the audio version of the sermon on the day it is given, therefore a historical record is available at the following website courtesy 3ID MND-C:
<http://www.3idportal.3id.army.smil.mil/c17/RE O-HILLA/default.aspx>

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